



Occupational risk of maid servant at Bhola Sadar sub-district, Bangladesh

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Employment of servant for household activities is very common in the urban area of Bangladesh; where a large number of housewives go outside for jobs due to modernization and urbanization. They want to perform their daily work easily by getting help from others e.g. near relatives, maid servant. Bhola Sadar Upazila is an urbanized and populated city in coastal Bangladesh. About 85% housewives have practiced maid servant services for regular domestic purposes. This study focuses on assessment of socio economic condition of maid servant and the problems they face at their workplace. For conducting this studies both primary (household survey, focus group discussion, key informants interview) and secondary data are collected from different secondary sources viz. journal, books, organizational report. The major finding of this study is most of the maid-servant is young, came from nuclear family, large number of them is illiterate or have passed in primary level, monthly income is less than 2,000 BDT and have to work from 5.00 A.M. - 9.00 P.M. respectively in rotation or from one house to another in case of part time job. Most of them lives in slum; lead a monotonous life and have to struggle every day for their survival. They face a numerous problems like low level of wage, a minimal pay or no pay for extra work, absence of leave facility, sexual harassment, attack from water and air born disease etc. Occupational safety policy and regulation for maid servant need to be mainstreamed at national and local level.

INTRODUCTION

Women along with man from times immemorial have formed an integral part of social structure throughout the world (Laxmidewi, 2018). The steady growth of women in the labour market in the past 20years, (1990-2010) worldwide (The World's Women, 2010), reflect the efforts women have put in, to retain their jobs. This increases the load of works and time spent by women, if both paid and unpaid responsibilities are taken into recognition. The report of United Nations on The World's Women 2010, confirmed that women spend at least twice as much time as men on domestic work. Haque (2012) has argued that the in socio economic conditions of women workers in South Asia are poor. Society has discriminated against women by not allowing them to act as major players economic activities. Nirmala (1999) has found that women go to work because of the irregular nature of employment that their men are involved in the low income. Sometimes they choose the type of work that their parents or relatives are involved. According to Ramazanoglu (1994) domestic service indicates the existence of a category of women who directly control the labour of other women. It is found that among all categories in the informal sector, earnings of domestic servants are lowest and their problems are many (Ahmed, 2009). The rate of

demanding for housemaids is very alarming because people are very busy and are not able to do all house work time to time. They want to finish their house work very easily by getting help from their maid servant (Ariyo 2001). Nirmala Banerjee has made an enquiry about women workers in the unorganized sector of economy and found that the employment was regular for working women and their wage rate was significantly lower as compared to those for men with equal qualifications. Bulgovind and Laxmi (1984) have studied that the maid servants are leading a miserable life. They suffer from low wage, long hours of work, shift in nature of job, lack of freedom and low prestige due to inferior status of the job. The fragmented nature of their job, lack of education and low bargaining capacity refrain them from organizing collectively. The domestic workers face various problems and one of them is deplorable wage level. The wages of domestic workers have not kept pace with the spiraling price-rise. Every price rise cuts their real wage and further nutritional deficiency for them (Haque, 2012). One of the main differences between paid and unpaid domestic work is that former involves following a work routine, which is imposed by the employer's order rather than evolved for oneself (Cock, 1989). In fact, many of these women are looking after more than one household but spend more time and work far more for their employer's than work in their own household. In many studies the focus has been on women's labor participation in agricultural and allied activities often erroneously considered to be only form of paid work available to the women of lower strata. In fact, in many rural areas female laborer's work as maid servant, often combining this employment with agricultural work on a seasonal and even daily wage basis (Kothari, 1991). Hence, domestic

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Figure 1 Map of Study Area

work contributes a substantive type of employment and generation of earnings for many women.

Two types of maids identified from our survey work. One group of women does the work for 'extra income on the other hand other groups of the domestic maids are working to earn their livelihood. Most of the respondents are forced to do this job to feed their family. They said that there is no other way to earn money with their little education and technical skill. Most of the maid started working after marriage when they realized that their husbands' income is not enough to meet their basic needs. The main objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To analyze the socio economic profile of maid-servant
2. To find out the risk they face at their workplace

METHODOLOGY

Study Area

The demographic profile of the study area is Bhola Sadar Upazila (Bhola district) area 413.16 sq km, located in between 22°32' and 22°52' north latitudes and in between 90°32' and 90°44' east longitudes (Figure 1). It is bounded by mehendiganj and lakshmipur Sadarupazilas on the north, bauphal and burhanuddinupazilas on the south, daulatkhannupazila on the east, barisalsadar, Mehendiganj and bakerganjupazilas on the west. Population Total 408094; male 210820, female 197274; Muslim 394553, Hindu 13413, Buddhist 47, Christian 19 and others 62. Water bodies Main Rivers: meghna, tentulia (BBS, 2015).

Data Collection

Our total sample size is 40. Samples are chosen randomly, 10 from each of the four areas mentioned above. Interviews are taken either at working place or at the residence of the domestic maids. We prepared is a combination of structured and unstructured questions. To know the incidence of the respondents' life, their feelings and ideas emphasis has been given on unstructured interviews. This study was conducted to know all aspects of life of the domestic maids in details.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Socio-economic Condition of Maid-servant

Age of the Respondent

Age is an important factor to identify the socio-demographic situation of a man or woman. Since the working ability mostly depends on the age structure. Those who are young in age, they are more active and capable of working and who are older in age; they are comparatively incapable of working. It is found that nearly one third of the workers (45.5%) were in the age group 10-15 years, followed by 42% in 15-20 age groups and 13% were in the age of above 20 years. A significant portion of young girls are work as maid-servant (Figure 2).

Family Structure

The study found that most (93.5%) of the maid-servant lived in nuclear families and a very few (6.5%) lived in joint families (Figure 3). It is observed that among the respondent 33% are heading their families as

they are either widows (17.5%) or divorcees (5.5%) and having no adult male member in their families. In most of the cases, they have to carry out entire family responsibility due to their irresponsible husbands.

Marital Status of Maid-Servant

From survey it is found that there were (65.5%) married, (11.5%) unmarried, (18.5%) widowed and (4.5%) divorced women. About (49.72%) of them married before the marriageable age, and the rest (50.28%) married after the 18 years of age (Figure 4).

Educational Status of Maid-Servant

Most of the workers (69.5%) are illiterate who are even unable to write their name. About 14% of them had primary school education and 24.5% had educations up to primary level. A small portion (5.5%) of them had education up to Upper Primary level and a few (.5%) are educated up to high school (Figure 5).

Maid-Servant and their Work

More or less all middle and upper class people employ female domestic servant in their households. The female domestic workers can be categorized as part time workers, full time workers. The part time workers work more than one house and serve 2-3 hours a day in a household. When the assigned work of house (1) is over they go away to another house. This mainly depends on their efficiency and capability to work. If there is a heavy workload than part time workers demand for meal. On the other hand, the full time workers only serve in a single house and they are provided three time meal. These type of workers do all works of the employer's household. Apart from these two types of domestic maids, another type of domestic worker may be found. They are known as occasional workers who serve for a few days when any emergency arises in a household. The tasks performed by all types of domestic workers are almost same such as cleaning utensils, sweeping and cleaning rooms, washing clothes, fetching water, daily marketing, looking after house etc (Table 1).

Wage of Maid-Servant

The wage of domestic servant depend on the nature of work, number of members in employer's household, size of the house or number of rooms, time to be spent etc. Among all types of domestic workers, part time domestic servant is paid least. The full time workers get more wages in cash in addition to their daily real wages than a part time maid. On the other hand occasional or emergency workers always expect high wage from the employers and their total earnings at the end of the job become profitable as compared to their average earnings. Apart from the cash wages, domestic maids received new clothes and festival grant in cash.

The wages of domestic servants may vary from one region to another (Figure 6). It is found that rate of wages in village are comparatively lower than upazila level. This is because, supply of domestic servants in village is often more than their demand and sometimes workers belonging to village have no bargaining capacity. However, still the wages of domestic servants are low in comparison with other workers in the informal sector.

Reasons for Engaging in Outside Job

Generally in our society man is considered the main source of the family's income. But in recent times a significant change found in the attitude of women towards taking works outside the home. Women have determined to work in different challenging professions. Many reasons

are influenced the working women in this regard. It is shown from Figure 7 that 15 percent women are engaged in job for bring solvency, 25 percent for herself, 60 percent for her empowerment. It is can be further noted that for the eradicating the economic hardship, woman, are compelled to engage in job.

The Risk Faced by Maid-servant at their Workplace

Level of Wage

The study found that most of the maid-servant are not satisfied with their present wages and they expect more. Among the respondent 46.50% said that the get low wage within which they cannot meet their basic needs. 38.50% said that they get medium level of wage and only 15% said that they get high level wage. It is true that the wage levels of domestic maid servants are much less than what they need. Some servants who had served their employers for 8 to 10 years reported that though their working period wage was not increased much (Figure 8).

Sexual Harassment

Many workers face sexual harassment by their male employers. Verbal sexual harassment by the male employers is generally very common at the work place. This is one of major problems at work place that only women face.

Food facilities

Full-time servants exclusively depended upon their employers for food. Only 30% had been getting nutrient food items from the houses and the rest were offered low quality food. They were given food only after all members of the house had taken food. In most cases their dining place was work area. Part-time servants had received some light food items from their working places and they demand for meal when there is a heavy workload. However, most of them had responded that they were not given nutrient food items from the houses.

Threat of Getting Fired

Most of the workers being less educated, the awareness to form a union is lacking among them. As there is no such domestic servants' unions formed across the country, they cannot raise their voice against employers' negative attitude because of getting fired.

Payment for Extra Work

The workers express their objections for imposing extra work burden by the employers. Volume of work rises day by day in the employers' house but workers have to do all tasks with initial agreed wages. The employers do not offer any extra wages for increasing work load. On the other hand, workers do not protest because of getting fired. For this extra work only 25.6% get payment and rest are not get any payment (Figure 9). Sometimes it is found that the extra money for that additional work is not sufficient.

Emergency Leave

When any emergency situation arises than the workers beg emergency leave but the study found that only 35% respondent get permission and 65% respondent do not get permission for any extra leave. As a result, they have to attend work regularly leaving any urgent personal necessity. Most of the maid-servant wants at least one holiday per week. But 90% of the employers are not agreed within this demand (Figure 10).

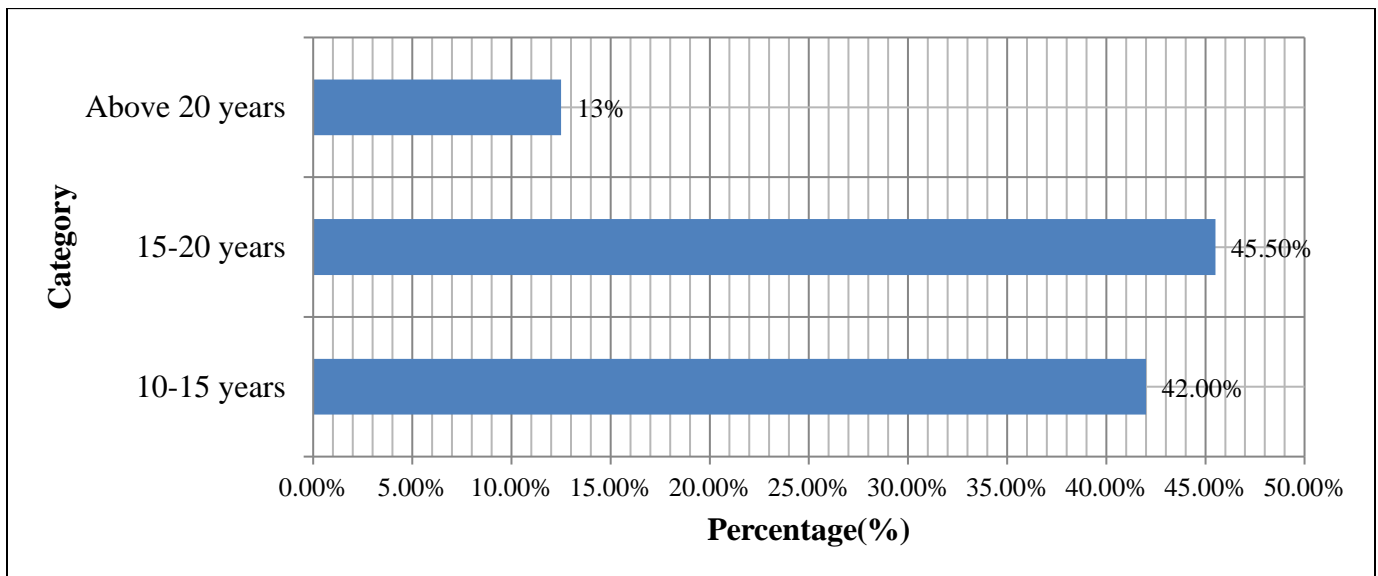


Figure 2 Age of the Respondent

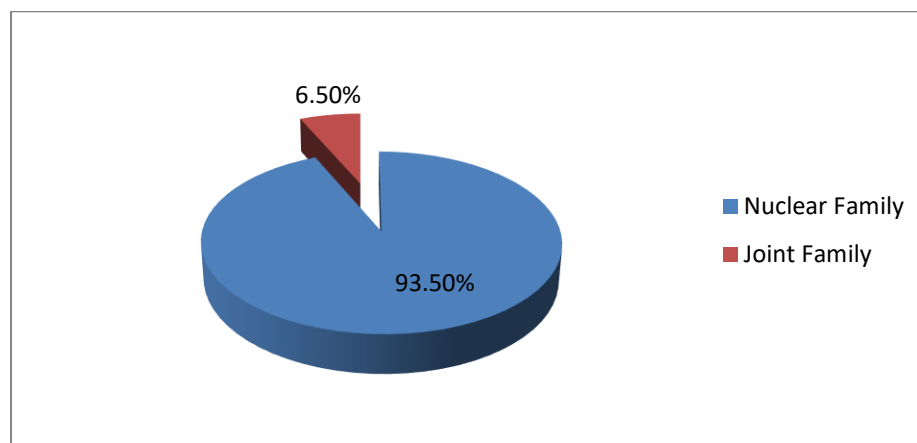


Figure 3 Size of the Family

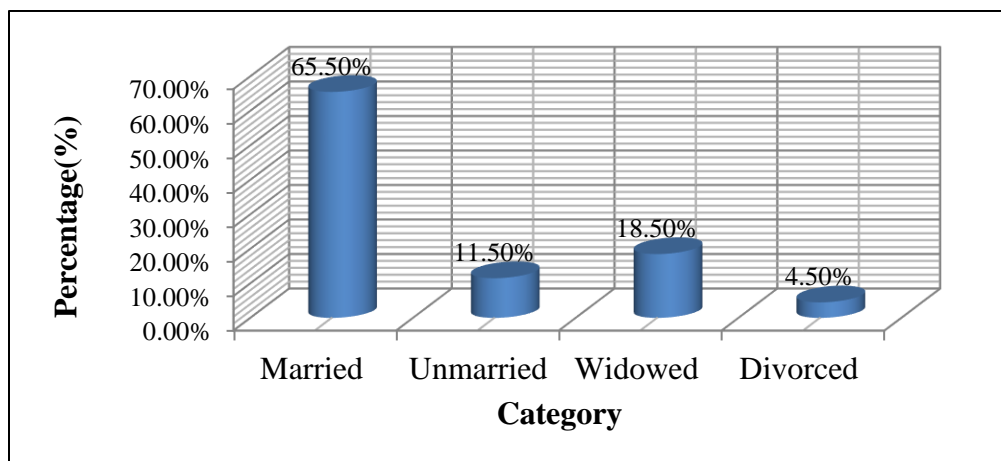


Figure 4 Marital Status of Maid-Servant

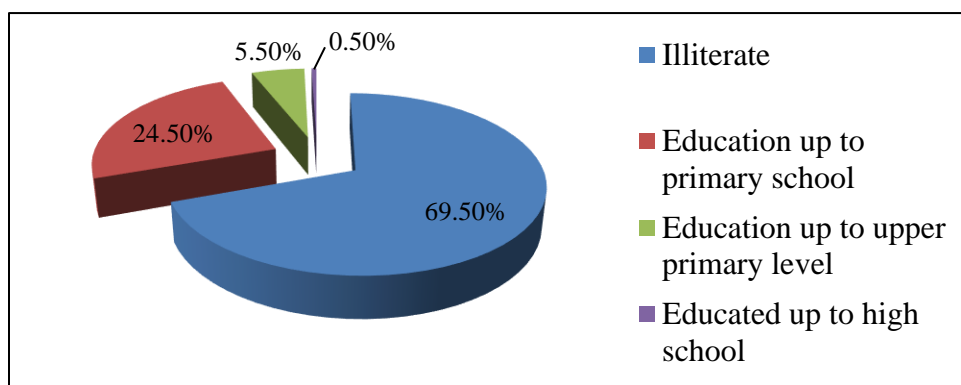


Figure 5 Educational Status of Maid-Servant

Table 1 Daily Work Profile of a Maid-servant

Time	Full Time Workers	Part time Workers	Occasional or Emergency Workers
5.00- 6.30 a.m	Rises	Rises Collects water and cleans own house Prepares breakfast for family members	Rises
7.00 a.m	Engaged in domestic tasks such as washing clothes, cleans rooms, etc	Goes to work place (1) and engaged in domestic tasks such as washing clothes, cleans rooms, Prepares breakfast etc	Goes to work place and engaged in domestic tasks for a few days on temporary basis.
8.00 a.m	Prepares breakfast	Prepares food at work place	
10.00 a.m	Does other work	Does other work	
12.00 noon	Prepares food	Attends work place (2) and does work	
1.30 p.m	Takes food	Returns home and cook for the family	
2.30 p.m	Washes utensils and sweeps rooms	Takes rest	
3.30 p.m	Takes rest	Attends work place (3) and does work such as Washes utensils and sweeps rooms	Returns home
5.00 p.m	Prepare evening tiffin	Returns home	
7.00 p.m	Prepare diner	Prepares food and feeds the children	Takes food & Goes to bed
8.00 -9.00 p.m	Takes food & Goes to bed	Takes food & Goes to bed	

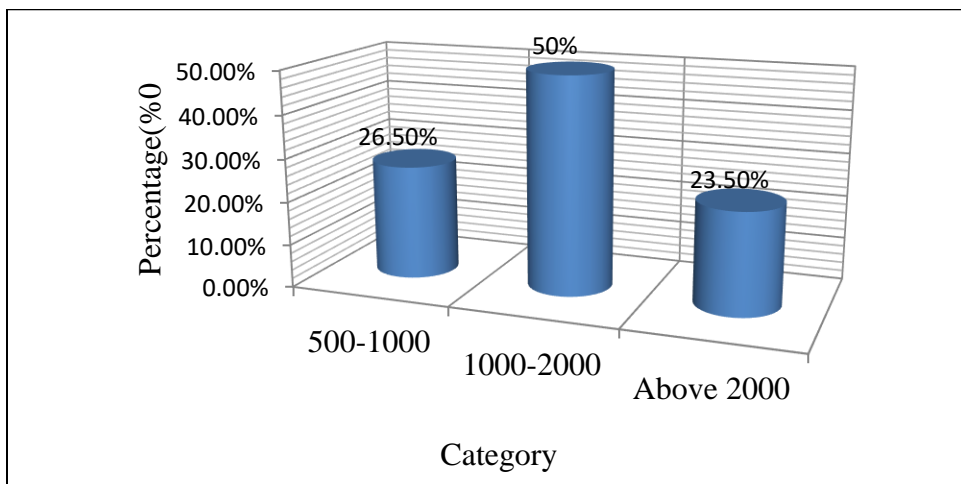


Figure 6 Income Level of Maid-Servant

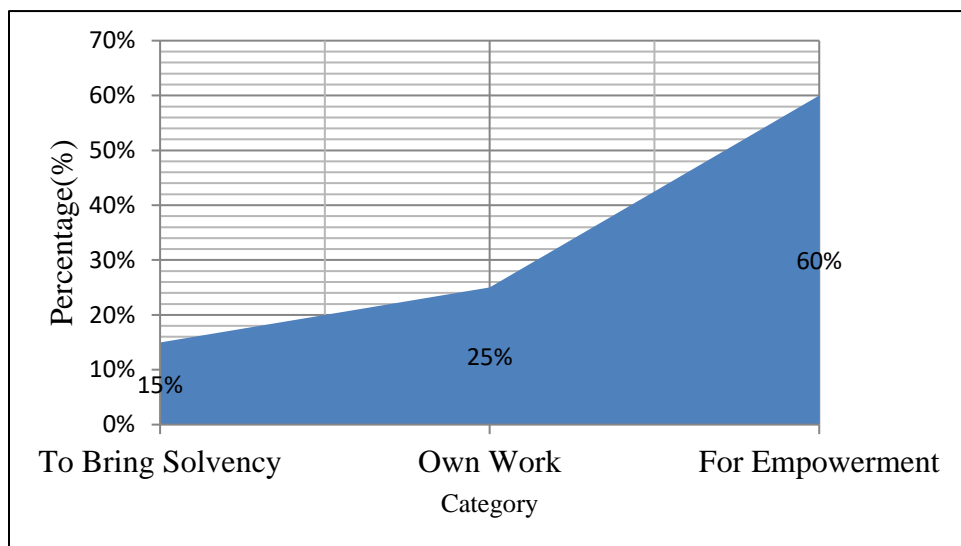


Figure 7 Reason for Engaging in Outside Job

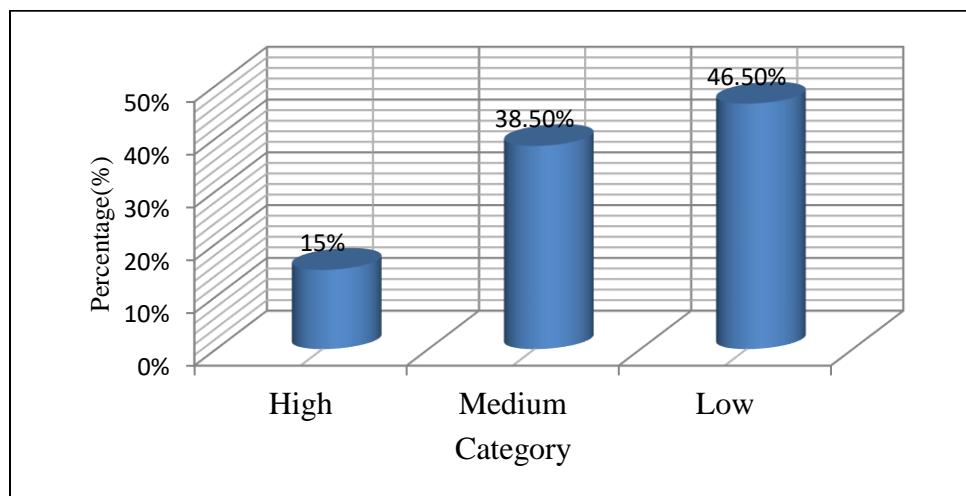


Figure 8 Wage Level of Maid-Servant

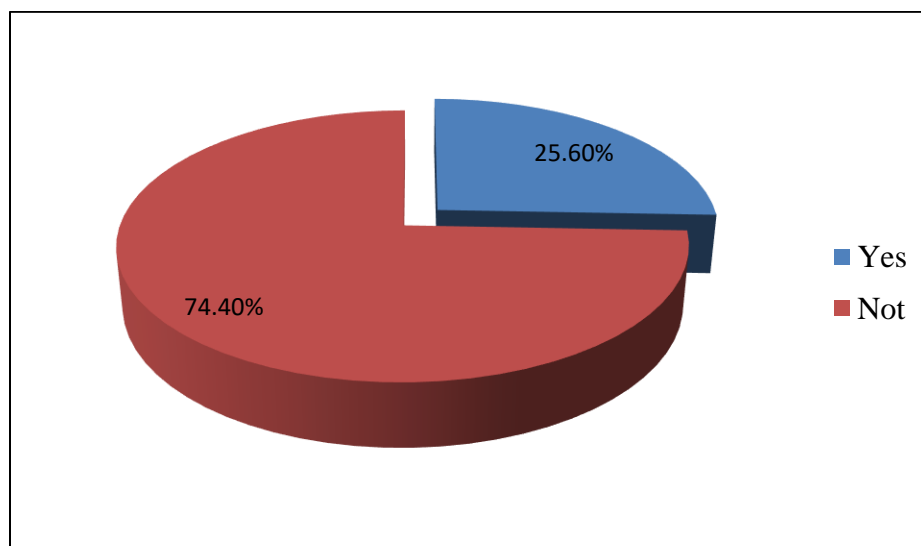


Figure 9 Payment for Extra Work

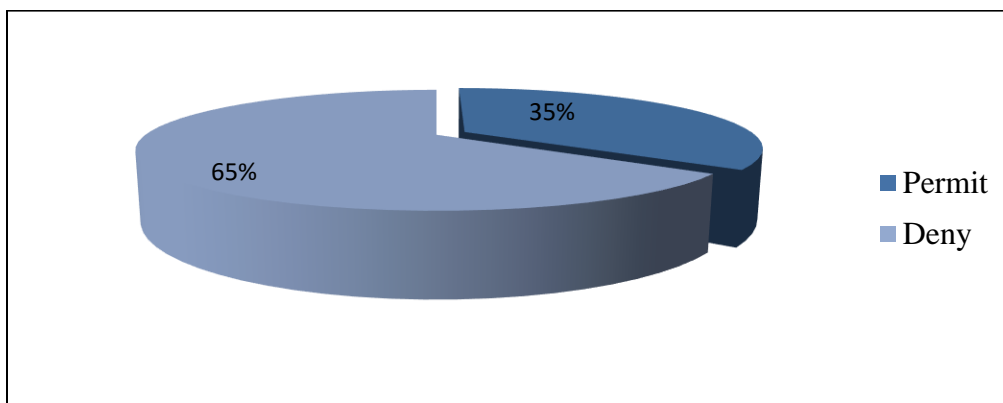


Figure 10 Getting permission for emergency leave

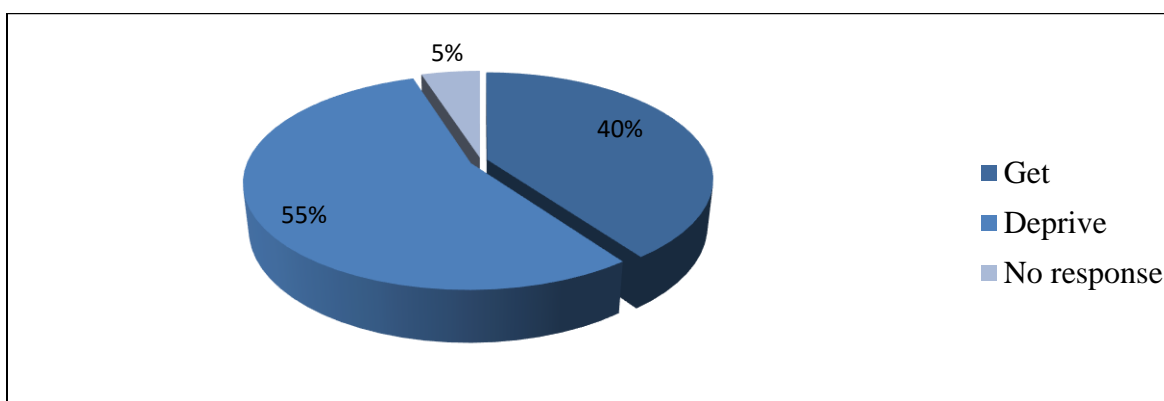


Figure 11 Recreational Facility of Maid-Servant

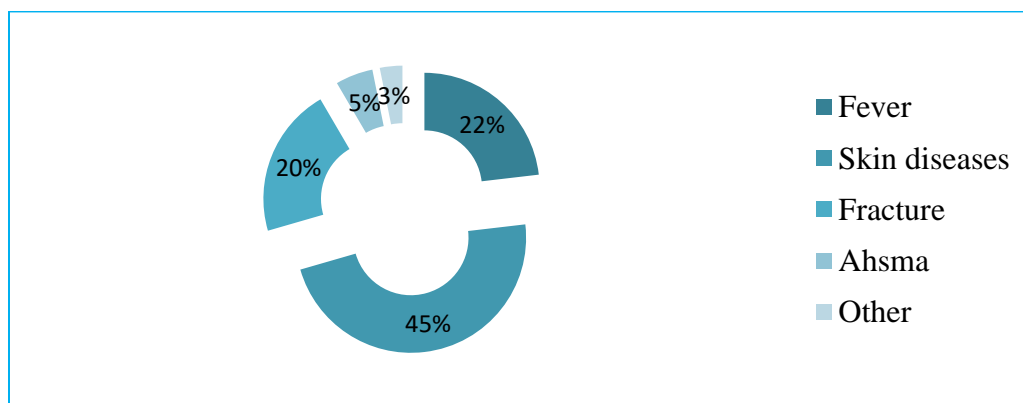


Figure 12 Diseases Suffer by Maid-Servant

Deducted Payment

Sometimes due to emergency case the maid-servant cannot attend the job. At that time salary of 20% women get reduced for their absence in work. However, all of them get leave if they fall sick and inform the employer.

Holidays & Recreational Facility

Most of the domestic servants have no weekly holidays. Normally on the occasion of Eid-festival they get the opportunity of holidays to meet

their parents/guardians and relatives. Watching TV is their only recreational media. In our study 40% respondents reported that they get the opportunity of watching TV, but 55% of them reported that they are deprived from this opportunity and remaining 5% have no response (Figure 11).

Restriction in Personal Freedom

Many of the respondents reported that they were lock in the house when the whole family goes somewhere for a few hours. This is a troubling

case. If fire or any other problem arises in the room, they would not be able to escape. This is obviously restrict personal freedom of the servants. This is also a violation of one of the rights of servant --"to freedom of association and to be protect from cruel in human degrading treatment", and set out in the in 1989. The women who have school-going children do not have enough time to look after their children because of their work load in their own house and in the house of employers.

Health Implications of Maid-servant

Suffer from Various Diseases

Domestic works have tremendous impacts on workers' health. Their health is their wealth because only if they have good health they are able to go for work. The physical conditions at work place and timing of work are very important for them to enjoy good health. The physical conditions of work place would include space, ventilation, illumination, temperature, hygiene and so on. All of these will assure the safety of the women domestic workers. But in the study it is found that 22% respondent suffer from fever, 45% suffer from different types of skin diseases this was because of the continuous use of soaps and detergents and contact with dust and dirt of house, 20 % have to suffer fracture, 5% suffer from asthma, and 3% suffer from other diseases (Figure 12). Another important fact is that most of the domestic workers reside in the slum areas where they have to face poor housing conditions, exposure to excessive heat or cold, diseases, air and water pollution in other words poor hygienic surrounding. As a result they suffer from various diseases.

Deprive from Proper Treatment

Due to their poor economic condition they are not able to go to doctors for best treatment. They are afraid of the huge medical expenditure. Due to poor environment of their residential places they have to face different types of health problems. It is also observed that due to lack proper health education, unawareness, gender discrimination unsanitary condition women are more vulnerable to various diseases.

No Time to Care their Own Health

Rest and leisure provides good health status, so it is necessary to ensure these factors. About 80% responded said that they take rest only while sleeping at night. They usually had to work from early morning till night both in their own house and working place. Sometimes they fell back pain due to the lack of rest. Among the servants married women have grater health risk than the unmarried young girls. It is because no proper care was given, no proper rest was taken by the married women both during pregnancy and post pregnancy period. Women whose husbands are addicted to alcohol and torture their wives are prone to get sick. Maid-Servant have to manage both home responsibilities as well as the demands of their employers they cannot think of their wellbeing and take proper care of their health.

CONCLUSION

Due to modernization and urbanization a large number of women go outside for jobs. But their participation in outside jobs is not given the same consideration as that men's get. Due to socio-economic condition sometimes women are force to work as maid-servant. They have to face a lot of problems at the work place which include low level of wage, a minimal pay or no pay for extra work, absence of leave facility, sexual harassment etc. But wages of the maid-servant are very low. The workers contribute a lion part of their earnings to the family and few of them have saving potentials. They have to struggle every day for their

survival. These problems can never be overcome until the concept of unionism is developed among the maid-servant.

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Article Keywords

Occupational Risk, Maid Servant, Socio-economic condition, Bhola

Article History

Received: 07 July 2018

Accepted: 22 August 2018

Published: 1 October 2018

Citation

Siddeqa M, Islam MT, Biswas AA. Occupational risk of maid servant at Bhola Sadar sub-district, Bangladesh. *Discovery*, 2018, 54(274), 397-404

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